DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 784 SO 012 837

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TITLE Materials and Area of Study for Advanced Placement Program in American History.
PUB DATE Dec 79
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association Convention (New York, NY, December 28-30, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acceleration; *Advanced Placement Programs; Educational Objectives; Research Skills; Secondary Education; Skill Development; Student Characteristics; Student Motivation; Teacher Role; *United States History

ABSTRACT

This paper describes and evaluates benefits of advanced placement programs and identifies materials which can help high school history classroom teachers develop effective advanced placement programs. An advanced placement program is defined as a program which requires a student to do extensive research and writing throughout the school year. Objectives of an advanced placement program in history are to help students develop basic reading, writing, interpretive, and research skills, and to help students understand the discipline and processes involved in becoming historians. To facilitate this research, schools must make library materials and an extensive resource area available to students. Suggestions for helping schools acquire these resources include asking college students to donate their history books after they are finished with them, soliciting samples from book salesmen, and using school funds to buy single copies of various materials. Textbooks which have been particularly useful in advanced placement programs include "The National Experience" by Blum et al. and "Sources of the American Republic," by Meyers, Kern, and Cawalti. Useful supplementary books include "The Jungle," by Upton Sinclair, "42nd Parallel," by John Dos Passos, and "The Grapes of Wrath," by John Steinbeck. Students involved in advanced placement programs are involved in a variety of activities including listening to lectures, developing theses, gathering and interpreting data, discussing issues in class, and writing research reports. (DB)

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SEP 15 1980

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

SURVEYING THE SURVEY: MATERIALS AND AREA OF STUDY FOR ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM IN AMERICAN HISTORY

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I. Types of material needed for the success of a U.S. History Advanced Placement program.

A key phase of any advanced placement program, especially in the area of social studies, requires that a student do extensive research and writing throughout the year. This in no way is to suggest that the student is now a historian and can do original research, for there are very few high schools in America that would be able to provide students with the resources necessary to do this. The advanced placement goal should be to train the students and give them the basic skills necessary to do research, teach them the process required and the discipline necessary to be a good historian. I doubt that any sixteen or seventeen year old student is anywhere near ready to be a pure historian; however, the seeds of intellectual curiosity can be sown at this early age. The advanced placement history teacher's job is to teach the skills necessary to pursue this goal. Several commodities, therefore, are necessary for this program to be successful. First and foremost would be that the teacher has got to be a reasonably decent historian. He or she should have done extensive reading and research, and know what is necessary to develop the skills of a historian. A little later in this program I will go through a folder that I have handed out showing the importance the students place on the role of the teacher. Once we have the two necessary credentials for this program, that is, an excellent teacher and highly motivated students, the process now becomes a challenge that both can enjoy.

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In order not to frustrate the student while doing research it is essential that the school system develop a complete library, but even more importantly I feel that an extensive resource area should be made available to the student where the necessary materials for research are available.

I have enclosed in your booklet a reasonably short bibliography developed for me by two of my Advanced Placement students of last year when I told them I was going to make this presentation. I simply asked them, (and I did not check this out,) to write down the sources that they used while doing research projects for me. Enclosed is one students source material. I think if I were to have asked another student I would have had another series with some similarity, but some variation. For any student pursuing a different area of interest will obviously have a different series of sources.

How is it possible for a school system to afford such a great variation of books in order to run a reasonably good advanced placement program? This question has been asked of me throughout my travels as a consultant for advanced placement, and I am always amazed that this is a problem, for I have found over the years, and I grant that I have done this so many years, that the resources I have been able to accumulate continue to multiply. However, it should not be a roadblock to any program, for you do not need class sets of anything. Two of this--three of that. How many times students that have gone off to college and returned for a visit. I have asked, "What are you doing with your history books?" They reply "Just going to throw them away or sell them" or something of that nature. I say, "Why don't you give them to me?" Over the years we have accumulated quite a nice little library--much of it free. Many of the sources used are samples from book salemen. We have a budget that is reasonably generous, and I have proceeded to buy five of this and a dozen of that. Over a decade you would be amazed at how extensive a resource area you can develop and never upset any part of the budget whatsoever. This is a key for developing a fine AP program. It should also be noted that every student that takes advanced placement is not your Ph.D candidate. Some of these students are highly motiviated students anxious to try to be a scholar. These students should receive all the encouragement possible by the school system, and therefore source material should not be written at such a level that they cannot possibly comprehend

it. Some of the AP students are very talented. They should also be challenged. They need a different variety of sources to make the program meaningful. I will address myself to any of those sources in our booklet as the session goes on, but let me proceed with what I consider one of the key elements for materials for our program. This is the one that gets the most moans and groans from the students, however, I have always felt that it is impossible, whether you have a one year program or a two year program, to cover all of the pertinent material. All one can do is develop an excellent course, and not worry about the AP exam. I would be very nervous about any school system that would devise a program that is simply geared to passing an examination. I am more interested in developing an excellent program in which the students will learn history, and then let the exam take care of itself. Historically we have never had any problem with the exam.

One of the basic elements for this course has got to be an excellent textbook--an area that a student can gain a lot of reasonbly accurate historical information. Every teacher will teach the course in a variety of different ways, and every teacher's interest will certainly get more emphasis than an area that he or she is not particulary well versed, or interested in. It is then very important that the text covers all areas rather completely which will fill in the gaps that may not be emphasized in class.

After many years of looking around and trying a variety of sources, the book that we have concluded is the best for our students is The National Experience, by Blum et al. For those of you that are secondary school teachers you would realize that a problem that we all must face is the reading level of any text. Our school is no different than anyone elses. We have students in the high school that read at the fifth grade level, all the way to the Ph.D. level. The National Experience is written at about the sixteenth grade level. In other words this text comes in at a senior level of college. The book requires that the student be an

excellent reader, which is another key to a successful program. A student must be highly motivated, but even if he is highly motivated and cannot read well, he will have too much difficulty in succeeding in this course and should probably not try the AP progrem. Reading this text requires great reading skill and the examination that is provided by the text is actually more difficult than the Advanced Placement Exam which is given by ETS. Although students find this text terribly difficult and very demanding, probably the most demanding text that they will get in their high school career, yet despite the complaining that takes place throughout the year the students eventually learn how to read this kind of a text and how to take this kind of an exam, and at the end of the program they will inevitably come back and say it was tough but it was worth it, for they not only learn how to glean important material from a book, and how to take multiple choice examinations, but how to do some creative thinking which really interests me, and how to realize the various interpretations that all historians must be able to delve through. Somehow or other this text gets students to think about history and once that happens they are on their way to good research and scholarship.

Beside a good text another good primary source book is valuable. We have used over the years the text Sources of The American Republic, by Meyers, Kern, and Cawalti, and again, although this is not particularly fun reading, we do go through many of these documents so that if the text is saying one thing we can check with the primary sources and see if that is indeed exactly what was meant by the speaker. It might also be noted that in the AP examination a good deal is done with primary sources in the DBQ, and students should become familiar with primary material, not only for the examination but because any good historian realizes that primary sources is the key element to good research. One thing that I have found over the years to be of great value to the students and a lot

of fun is that we tend to read what we call an outside book on a quarterly basis. The students continuously remind me that quarterly means only four a year. We tend to read six. Again, depending on the calibre of the class and how well prepared they are, determines for me how much work they can handle. Some might say this sounds more like an American studies program than American history, and I suppose in fact it really is, but most textbooks tend to emphasize political and diplomatic history, and another phase of history that I enjoy, at least letting students become aware of, is some Social History. Consequently we read such books as Upton Sinclair's, The Jungle, John Dos Passos', 42nd Parallel, Steinbeck's great book The Grapes of Wrath, etc. An outside book is for leisurely reading, but also to give them another example of what life was like, not necessarily for the politician, but for the average person. I also feel strongly that they should have read some of these great classics somewhere in their high school career, if not in their college career, and this is a good place to do it. Students generally like doing this, it is a lot more fun than the textbook, and easier for them to just relax under a tree somewhere and enjoy.

II. Areas of study

Some of this may be a little repetitious, but I want to emphasize that there are certain skills that students need to develop in any history program, and of course an Advanced Placement program just emphasizes it all the more. Not only must they develop good reading and writing skills, we have got to develop interpretation skills, and this is not so easy as it is much more subtle. What I mean by interpretation skills, is that it is imperative that students realize that just because one historian says something, that does not make it the gospel. Unfortunately if we zero in just on the textbook, and I have mentioned the excellence of the text, this does not therefore mean that we have the final word. With this in mind I spend a good deal of time trying to develop what I call thesis statements. Students must learn to develop a concept about a historical event--anything that they are particularly interested in during a phase of American history--and then learn to develop an excellent theme or a thesis statement which they can then research to find out what interpretations are available and then write a short paper that clearly states a position supported by good evidence. It is important here that students are encouraged that their interpretation, based on their evidence, is good and this should not be seriously criticized no matter what the position of the teacher may be. The skill that is being developed here is interpretation, thesis writing, and development of a research paper. Not all students are particularly interested in a particular phase of history. There is always the youngster that enjoys the causes of wars, the wars themselves, and although I tend to be not that interested in this phase, if they are interested in it and if that is the way you can develop the basic skills needed, that is fine. What you find us doing is a lot of what we call post-holing. No history program can cover all the bases. What we tend to do is to pick particular important areas--and again these will be noted in your handout--that we consider important and we the

teachers develop these themes and develop a thesis ourselves, and make a presentation to the students on a weekly basis. In other words, a new theme is developed weekly. Those of you that teach at the universities are probably chuckling, thinking that here is a high school going from topic to topic on a weekly basis, where anyone of these areas would probably be a semester course at a university. High school teachers understand this--but we don't let this get in our way for we are not a university, and we are not pretending that we are great historians. All that we are doing is developing the kind of program that meets the needs of all the students, keeping in mind that in our particular program we are not just addressing advanced placement students, we are addressing all of the students. Advanced placement students will be expected to do a lot more work to meet the challenge than the non-advanced placement student, but all must learn. This presentation takes place every Monday--and you can see the kind of topics that we cover in our two-year program. In fact you may be a little bit envious to think that this kind of program does indeed work, and it works very well--at the secondary level. The students now having listened to this program--this theme--this thesis--this lecture, are expected to go off throughout the rest of the week, find materials necessary in our resource area and develop at least the thesis statement. As we proceed through the two years these students are able to then develop extensive papers. What I am really trying to get at here is that every student is different, every student's interests are different, and you should be able to allow the students to go in the various areas that they are interested in--not necessarily the areas that the teacher is interested in--the presentation is only a guideline into the various areas they may want to consider. For example, are they interested in the Progressive Period? We have a lecture on the Progressives. In fact, that is a two-lecture program. The students might want to develop a theme around the Progressives. Well, what about the Progressives should they develop? Urbanization - urban reform - the Federal laws. amendments - what indeed? Every student has a variety of interests, and by the way this makes for excellent

classroom discussions for when they have done their work--and done their reading--and their teacher has guided them toward a variety of sources, they can glean the material--return to the discussion areas and discuss very intelligently what was going on from a variety of different positions. Not only are they learning various interpretations from a paper, but the students themselves are coming at a discussion from a variety of different positions which makes for exciting discussions in a classroom setting.

III. Developing research skills and its connection with the DBQ.

Throughout my talk today I have continuously been mentioning the importance of students becoming familiar with different historians and various interpretations, and applying this newly acquired knowledge into some kind of a theme which will be written out. This is a basic skill for the good historian. One of the most controversial parts of the Advanced Placement Exam over the past several years has been the role of the DBQ. I have met with many college teachers and their argument is that the students don't really need to know any history in order to answer the DBQ, and possibly on any one particular question that indeed may be the case. However, what the DBQ is testing is the ability of students to gather material, interpret it, and write an interesting essay or theme around the data. This is one area that high school teachers spend a good deal of time doing, and it is only fair that they be tested in this skill. No one student knows all the history, but no one college student or college professor, for that matter, knows all the history. Therefore, if a student has acquired the basic skills necessary to do good historical work, this should be taken very seriously, the student is indeed well prepared and has probably done as much work as any college student has done in a preliminary course.

Over these past few minutes I have tried to give you an idea of what an exciting high school program can do for a student. It is important that the college people realize that although most high school teachers do not have Ph.D's they still know a good deal about history teaching, and with a correct attitude on both the part of the teacher and the student, all kinds of exciting studies can take place. Advanced placement exams are not designed to make historians out of youngsters. It is to challenge, open up new avenues, give greater insight, and develop basic skills. I would suggest that probably not much more can be done at a freshman or

sophomore level with a college student. I have handed out to everyone a little brochure of some of the things we do. I know another high school would have another series of programs, but they probably reach the same ends. I hope that you will glance through these. I did bring some slides showing some of this work in action if anyone is interested during our exchange later on. And, I also have some overheads that will cover any of the material in your brochure if there is some question regarding any of these areas. Thank you for your interest.

December 1979

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